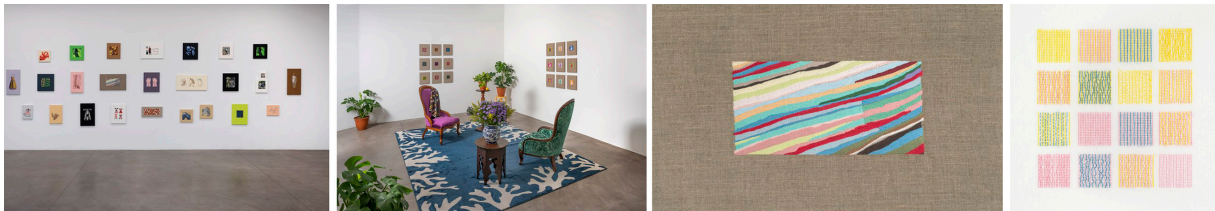


Art Now L.A.
June 23, 2023

Elaine Reichek: 'Frock-Conscious'
Critiquing and Celebrating Modes and Methods of Representation
Shoshana Wayne Gallery
June 10 - July 22, 2023

by Jody Zellen



Over the years, numerous artists have used the works of others as a point of departure for their own creations. The list is long and includes a wide range of approaches. Yasumasa Morimura and Cindy Sherman re-staged famous paintings as photographs, while Deborah Kass and Elaine Sturtevant replicated paintings by their male counterparts, often infusing them with a feminist agenda. Elaine Reichek also draws from pre-existing works.

In her compelling exhibition *Frock-Conscious*, Reichek appropriates artworks of varying styles and periods to explore the relationship between textiles and paintings. Choosing both well and lesser known examples, she recreates aspects of original drawings, designs and paintings as delicate embroidery, both hand-sewn and digitally fabricated. The term “Frock Conscious” comes from a quote from the *Diary of Virginia Woolf* that reads, “My present reflection is that people have any number of states of consciousness: & I should like to investigate the party consciousness, the frock consciousness, &c.” Reichek uses the idea of “frock consciousness” as a jumping off point for this series to look at the representation of clothing or fabric.

Each small piece reproduces a fragment of texture or pattern from the original artwork, and often centers it within a solid colored background, also derived from the source. Because the source material is not always that obvious and she often isolates a small section, her finished pieces at first glance appear to be colorful abstractions. To aid viewers' understanding, the gallery provides a helpful handout that illustrates Reichek's sources.

For example, *Bronzino Curtain on Green* (2020) presents a section of drapery from the background of *Lodovico Capponi* (ca. 1550–55), an oil painting by Agnolo Bronzino. Reichek focuses on the folded green fabric behind the subject, rather than the portrait. Similarly in *Tissot Ruffle* (2020), she recreates a section of the pink ruffled dress worn in Jacques Joseph Tissot's *Portrait of the Marquise de Miramon, née Thérèse Feillant* (1866). *Rousseau Dress* (2018) is a striated abstraction centered in a rectangle of raw linen that comes from the garment worn by the sleeping gypsy in Rousseau's painting. More contemporary borrowings include Kerry James Marshall's *Untitled (Gallery)*, (2016) and John Currin's, *Tapestry* (2013) presented as two fragments positioned on the wall at the same distance that they appear in the painting.

The twenty-four works are installed salon-style on the wall and become a curious sampling of art history as Reichek appropriates from male artists to transform their painted works into what is commonly thought of as a woman's craft. Together, they create an interesting conversation about appropriation, women's work, the relationship between thread and pixels (as many are

digitally produced) as well as the relationship between fine art and craft.

Also included in the exhibition are curious homages to Jackson Pollock and Henri Matisse. *JP Textile/Text 1* and *JP Textile/Text 2* (2021) are large-scale works where Reichek has embroidered citations from Pollock's bibliography in different fonts and colors atop commercially produced fabric that emulates one of Pollock's all-over drip paintings. A second reference to Pollock is a triptych of digital photographs printed on silk. *Vogue, March 1, 1951, Photographed by Cecil Beaton against Jackson Pollock Paintings* (2023) is taken from Vogue magazine, and shows women modeling ball gowns from the 1950s in front of paintings by Pollock.

Reichek has transformed the back gallery into a sitting room or showroom devoted to the work of Matisse and his circle. Here, Reichek's embroideries are presented with commercially produced fabrics inspired by Matisse: two chairs, a rug and a number of potted plants whose shapes are similar to *Scattered "Sheaf" with Felt and Fabric* (2022). The installation uses Matisse's colorful, graphic shapes of leaves and his depictions of bodies as the inspiration for a suite of small-scale embroideries. *Screen Time with Matisse* (2022) separates the different aspects of the installation: a folding screen collaged with fabric swatches, embroidery and photographic reproductions.

Although Reichek loads the installation with a wide range of references and implied conversations between past and present, the installation is more playful and humorous than didactic. It is a delight to compare *Darning Sampler: Lewitt's Color Grids* to *Darning Sampler* (both 2018), and acknowledge the similarities as well as the differences between traditional embroidery patterns and LeWitt's algorithmic process of combining lines and colors. Reichek looks hard at the history of art and creates her own timeline— in order to critique and to celebrate certain modes and methods of representation.

<https://artnowla.com/2023/06/23/elaine-reichek-frock-conscious/>